

# Family Court

The Family Court experienced a number of significant changes during Fiscal Year 2003. The first occurred in August 2002 when the judges and staff of the Family Court in New Castle County moved from our courthouse at 900 King Street to the New Castle County Courthouse at 500 King Street. The new courthouse is a state-of-the-art facility creating an environment conducive to the efficient and effective delivery of justice.

On July 31, 2002, Edward G. Pollard left his position as the Family Court Administrator to become the Deputy State Court Administrator within the Administrative Office of the Courts. Mr. Pollard joined the Family Court in December 1992 as the Family Court Administrator and worked tirelessly to define, develop and improve the administrative functions within the Family Court. While Mr. Pollard's experience and service is missed in Family Court, the Judicial Branch is quite fortunate to have a person with his experience, knowledge and expertise working in the Administrative Office of the Courts in a position that will provide benefits to the entire Judicial Branch.

On March 31, 2003, Chief Judge Vincent J. Poppiti retired from the Delaware Judiciary after 24 years on the bench in Delaware. Judge Poppiti served as an Associate Judge with the Family Court from February 1979 to June 1983 at which time he became a judge in the Superior Court of Delaware. Judge Poppiti served as a Superior Court judge until January 1992, when he was nominated and confirmed as the Chief Judge of the Family Court. During his tenure with the Family Court, Chief Judge Poppiti oversaw the introduction of new and innovative programs while stabi-



Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Kuhn

lizing and enhancing the administrative functions at both the statewide and county level.

Family Court Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Kuhn was sworn in as the Chief Judge of the Family Court on June 4, 2003. Since that time, Chief Judge Kuhn has focused much of her time on the transition from her role as an Associate Judge to her new role as the Family Court's Chief Judge. Chief Judge Kuhn's priorities include continuing and enhancing those programs that were in place and performing well when she took office, as well as pursuing new initiatives

which complement and facilitate the Court's Mission and Strategic Plan. Other priorities for Chief Judge Kuhn include: improvement of the security, safety and functionality of the Family Court buildings in all three counties; enhancement of the services provided for self-represented litigants coming before the Court; implementation of the Family Court Performance Standards and Measures coupled with the development of a formal strategic plan for the Court; acquisition of the Judicial and staff resources necessary for the Court to meet its established performance standards; full participation in the COTS initiative so as to ensure the development of an information and case management system which will facilitate the Court in meeting our case management objectives; expansion and enhancement of the degree of collaboration among the judges and administrative staff relative to the strategic direction and administrative function of the Court; and continuation of the full statewide implementation of the Court Improvement Project. Chief Judge Kuhn emphasizes the importance of focusing the resources of the Court on the quality of service we provide to the citizens of our state so

that matters within the Court's jurisdiction are resolved as expeditiously as possible while meeting our obligation to provide our citizens with the highest quality of justice feasible.

On October 17, 2003, Arlene Minus Coppadge became the 39<sup>th</sup> individual since 1971 to be sworn as an Associate Judge on the Family Court of the State of Delaware, and the first to be sworn in at the Court's new home in New Castle County. Judge Coppadge filled the vacancy left by Chief Judge Kuhn when she assumed her new role as Chief Judge. Judge Coppadge sits in New Castle County and currently is assigned to the Civil Division. She most recently comes to Family Court from the Court of Common Pleas, where she served as a commissioner since 1994.

In June, the Court welcomed Jennifer L. Mayo as the Court's newest Commissioner. Commissioner Mayo was sworn in by Chief Judge Kuhn on June 12, 2003. Commissioner Mayo was appointed by Governor Ruth Ann Minner to fill a position funded by the Fiscal Year 2004 budget to hear the Child Protection Registry caseload on a statewide basis. She conducts child protection registry hearings in all three counties.

Fiscal Year 2003 was not only a year of significant change for the Family Court but also a year of significant accomplishments.

Family Court continues to strive to provide quality services to self-represented litigants. The Family Court operates Resource Centers in Dover and Georgetown and participates as a full partner in the New Castle County Courthouse Self Help Center. During Fiscal Year 2003, 24,418 individuals availed themselves to the services of the Family Court Resource Centers in Kent and Sussex Counties. The New Castle County Courthouse Self Help Center assisted 18,964 visitors during this past fiscal year. The Family Court has made great strides and has received substantial praise for our efforts on behalf of those citizens who represent themselves in Family Court. Based on feedback from a variety of sources, implementation of Family Court's *pro se* program has already contributed to more efficient court operations, to enhancing the public's access to the Court, and to enhancing litigants' participation in the court process and their meaningful right to be heard. Litigants are being referred to the Resource and Self

Help Centers by state agencies, organizations, legislators and attorneys. Litigants continue to report to Family Court that they have benefited from the gamut of resources available at a single location to help guide them through the legal process. Some litigants were particularly thankful to have visited the Centers because the resources helped them determine whether they were capable of representing themselves. Staff report that they spend significantly less time trying to assist self-represented litigants since the Resource Centers have opened. Communications with self-represented litigants are more succinct because the resources at the Centers supplement the information staff provides. Furthermore, deficient and inappropriate filings have appeared to decrease particularly in the areas where instruction packets are available. The addition of the Filings Examiner position also has contributed to decreased bottlenecks and deficient filings. Judicial Officers report spending less time explaining the legal process because litigants are more prepared and/or because they can refer litigants having questions or requiring additional information to the Resource and Self Help Centers.

In 1999, the Delaware Supreme Court's special committee on Family Court Internal Operating Procedures recommended that the Family Court's filing process could be improved materially if legally-trained personnel reviewed filings at the outset. In Fiscal Year 2001 the Family Court hired its first Filings Examiner. This position is unique in Delaware's courts and rare throughout the nation. The intent in developing the filings examiner concept was to reduce the frustration of the self-represented litigant who inadvertently or unwittingly filed inappropriate or insufficient documents with the Court and waited sometimes months only to find out that the Court could not proceed and that he/she would have to start over. The law-trained position reviews all filings received by the Court from the self-represented and promptly intercedes to expedite the return of any insufficient documents to the litigant so that the necessary corrections can be made early on and the process expedited. As a result, the litigant's time, as well as that of staff, is not wasted while the paperwork moves forward through what could be unnecessary processing. During the six-month period of April through September 2003, the Fil-

ings Examiner reviewed 733 civil petitions filed by self-represented litigants. Of these, 215 petitions (29 percent of those filed) required corrective action. Accordingly, these 215 deficient petitions were either corrected or dismissed before they reached a court calendar. Additionally, the work of the Filings Examiner helped to ensure that the remaining 518 *pro se* petitions (71 percent of those filed) were ready for Court action when calendared. This proactive effort by Family Court makes great strides in achieving what the committee called the most important aspect of Family Court work from the litigant's perspective, the "rendering of timely justice". Family Court's single Filings Examiner is located in the Family Court in Kent County. Additional filings examiners for Sussex and New Castle Counties will allow the Court to provide this most worthwhile program on a statewide basis.

The Court Improvement Program (CIP) is a multi-year, federally-funded grants project designed to support state courts in efforts to improve their handling of cases involving children in foster care, termination of parental rights and adoption proceedings. Delaware has participated in this project since its inception in 1994. In Fiscal Year 2003, representatives from James Bell Associates were contracted by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services to conduct an evaluability study to determine if and how the impact of CIP initiatives could be measured. In some states, specific aspects of particular court reforms were recommended for study and evaluation. However, because of its sweeping systemic reforms, the Delaware Family Court was recommended as a statewide study site and was ultimately selected as one of only two states to be included in a national plan for evaluation of CIP, pending availability of federal funds. During Fiscal Year 2003, the Family Court sponsored several training programs grounded in child welfare law for judges, attorneys, children's representatives and providers of social services.

The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) provides trained volunteers to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in court proceedings. Despite a staff shortage and hiring freeze, in Fiscal Year 2003, 215 CASA volunteers served as guardians *ad litem* for 639 abused and neglected children in the Family Court.

With a goal to diversify its volunteer pool to better reflect the community it serves, the CASA program developed new public relations materials and specific plans for targeted volunteer recruitment in each county. The statewide program served as a pilot site for the National CASA Association's new Quality Assurance Program that measures compliance with national standards and is included in the first group of programs to complete the Quality Assurance process.

In May 2002, the Family Court implemented an automated financial management system in its collections offices, records rooms and Pro Se Centers. This system is modeled after the system currently in use in JP Court and the Court of Common Pleas. With the adoption of the Financial Management System (FMS), the Family Court is on the same technological level as the other courts and is in a position to accept branch-wide collections rather than restricting activities only to Family Court functions. As such, the collection resources of the judiciary will be broader in terms of knowledge, capabilities and the ability to serve a larger portion of the citizenry of the State. Additionally, the Family Court is now able to proactively manage accounts receivable in order to ensure that court orders are honored. In an attempt to increase receivables from both old and new cases, Family Court has partnered with OSCCE (Office of State Court Collections Enforcement). In addition to their standard collection practices, OSCCE has been successful in collecting older fines via tax intercept and by the recent scheduling of contempt calendars in Family Court. As for increasing collection of current receivables, plans are underway to allow OSCCE to take payments on Family Court cases at each of their satellite offices, thus increasing the number of payment locations from 3 to 8 statewide. In October 2003, Family Court began accepting credit card payments for all fines and fees. It is anticipated that as a result, outstanding "receivables" will be reduced substantially, and restitution payments to victims will be accelerated.

While the Court has settled in at its new state-of-the-art facility in New Castle County, the Family Court buildings in Kent and Sussex Counties, now fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) years old respectively, have become outdated, overcrowded

and simply no longer adequately meet the needs of the Court and the public we serve. Family Court, in conjunction with the Department of Administrative Services and the Administrative Office of the Courts, has begun a multi-year initiative to renovate and expand our courthouses in our southern counties. Architectural space needs studies have been completed for both facilities, which clearly identify the deficiencies in both facilities and provide a multi-year plan for addressing those deficiencies. The first of several phases of renovations will begin shortly in Kent County, and funding has been requested to begin the project in Sussex County during Fiscal Year 2005. The initial phases of renovations in both Kent and Sussex Counties are aimed at correcting significant deficiencies relative to security, public accessibility, prisoner holding and management and general overcrowding in public and office areas.

House Bill #528, enacted by the 141<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, established the Child Protection Registry and assigned jurisdiction for hearing these cases to the Family Court. The Child Abuse Registry Act was signed into law and became effective on February 2, 2003. The Fiscal Year 2004 Budget provides funding for one full-time commissioner to hear the Child Protection Registry Act caseload. At present the commissioner hears all Child Protection Registry cases on a statewide basis and conducts hearings in all three counties.

In Fiscal Year 2002, Family Court completed a review of Drug Court best practices and designed a new Adjudicated Drug Court model. The proposed approach received legislative endorsement with the passage of a law that grants conditional licenses to misdemeanor participants, permits the vacating of their sentences once they have completed the program successfully and gives the Court authority to compel parents into assessment and treatment if indicated. In addition, treatment funding will allow the Division of Child Mental Health, to act as the managed care organization for a host of treatment agencies. Since the first juvenile entered this program in January 2003, the Juvenile Drug Court Program has grown steadily. At one point, the program had reached its maximum enrollment capacity in New Castle and Kent Counties. It had grown so much in New Castle County that an additional judge was added to hear juvenile Drug Court cases in that county. Presently, there

are 21 juveniles enrolled in New Castle County, 15 in Kent and 7 in Sussex (43 statewide). The continuing subject of the bi-monthly Drug Court Team Meetings is reaching the goal of 75 enrolled youth at any given time by the end of the program's first year.

Family Court was the program recipient of a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant to provide pre-trial supervision of offenders in domestic violence cases. The program is aimed at providing greater safety for victims of domestic violence by better managing their alleged abusers during the pre-trial period of the criminal prosecution process. The program has served 70 cases since the onset of the grant. Currently, 40 cases are in the active group and 40 are in the comparison group. The grant activity at present is confined to Family Court, as the Court of Common Pleas and Superior Court are revising their entry processes. With the help of the Attorney General's Office, a process has been developed whereby the Domestic Violence Investigative Services Officer picks up cases during arraignments and bail review hearings. Pre-trial reports are submitted only when the defendant pleads guilty or has been found guilty as a result of trial. The Court anticipates meeting the 90 case goal by the end of the year.

The Judicial Branch Career Ladder project that had been underway for several years in partnership with all of the courts and the State Personnel Office came to fruition. A total of 7 supervisors and 41 Family Court employees in the civil and criminal case processing units were promoted during the initial implementation of the career ladders. Additionally, the structure is in place so that employees will have continued opportunities to move up as they qualify for higher-level positions through experience and job skills attainment.

One of the key elements for advancement through the career ladders is the need for each employee to have a current performance evaluation in his/her human resources file. In concert with this need and the recognition that all employees benefit from regular performance feedback, several initiatives were undertaken in order to sustain performance that is exceptional, improve performance that is below standard and provide performance-enhanced feedback to all Court employees.





Family Court Judges

*Back Row (standing left to right)*

Associate Judge Aida Waserstein  
Associate Judge John E. Henriksen  
Associate Judge Arlene Minus Coppadge  
Associate Judge Jay H. Conner  
Associate Judge Alison Whitmer Tumas  
Associate Judge Mardi F. Pyott  
Associate Judge Peter Jones  
Associate Judge William N. Nicholas  
Associate Judge William L. Chapman, Jr.  
Associate Judge Barbara D. Crowell

*Front Row (sitting left to right)*

Associate Judge Mark D. Buckworth  
Associate Judge Kenneth M. Millman  
Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Kuhn  
Associate Judge William J. Walls, Jr.  
Associate Judge Robert B. Coonin

### **Legal Authorization**

The Family Court Act, Title 10, Chapter 9, Delaware Code, authorizes the Family Court.

### **Court History**

The Family Court of the State of Delaware has its origin in the Juvenile Court for the city of Wilmington which was founded in 1911. A little over a decade later, in 1923, the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court for the city of Wilmington was extended to include New Castle County. In 1933, the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties was created.

From the early 1930s, there was a campaign to establish a Family Court in the northernmost county, and this ideal came to fruition in 1945 when the legislature created the Family Court for New Castle County, Delaware. In 1951, legislation was enacted to give the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties jurisdiction over all family matters, and in early 1962, the name of the Juvenile Court for Kent and Sussex Counties was changed to the Family Court for Kent and Sussex counties.

As early as the 1950s, the concept of a statewide Family Court had been endorsed. The fruition of this concept was realized with the statutory authorization of the Family Court of the State of Delaware in 1971.

### **Geographic Organization**

The Family Court is a unified statewide court with branches in New Castle County in Wilmington, Kent County in Dover, and Sussex County in Georgetown.

### **Legal Jurisdiction**

The Family Court has had conferred upon it by the General Assembly jurisdiction over juvenile delinquency, child neglect, dependency, child abuse, adult misdemeanor crimes against juveniles, child and spouse support, paternity of children, custody and visitation of children, adoptions, terminations of parental rights, divorces and annulments, property divisions, specific enforcement of separation agreements, guardianship over minors, imperiling the family relation-

ship, orders of protection from abuse and intra-family misdemeanor crimes.

The Family Court does not have jurisdiction over adults charged with felonies or juveniles charged with first and second degree murder, rape and kidnapping, and assault and robbery in the first degree.

Cases are appealed to the Supreme Court with the exception of adult criminal cases which are appealed to the Superior Court.

### **Judges**

Family Court has 15 judges of equal judicial authority, one of whom is appointed by the Governor as Chief Judge and who is the chief administrative and executive officer for the Court. A bare majority of the judges must be of one major political party with the remainder of the other major political party.

The Governor nominates the judges, who must be confirmed by the Senate. The judges are appointed for 12-year terms. Judges must have been duly admitted to the practice of law before the Supreme Court of Delaware at least five years prior to appointment and must have a knowledge of the law and interest in and understanding of family and children's issues. They shall not practice law during their tenure and may be reappointed.

### **Other Judicial Personnel**

Family Court uses commissioners to hear specific types of cases. Commissioners are appointed for six-year terms by the Governor with the consent of a majority of the Senate.

### **Support Personnel**

The Family Court has a staff of more than 290 persons in addition to judicial officers, including a court administrator, directors, clerks of court, administrative specialists, accountants, judicial assistants, mediation/arbitration officers, intake officers, program coordinators and volunteers working in all areas of the Court.

## Total Cases Explanatory Notes Fiscal Year 2003

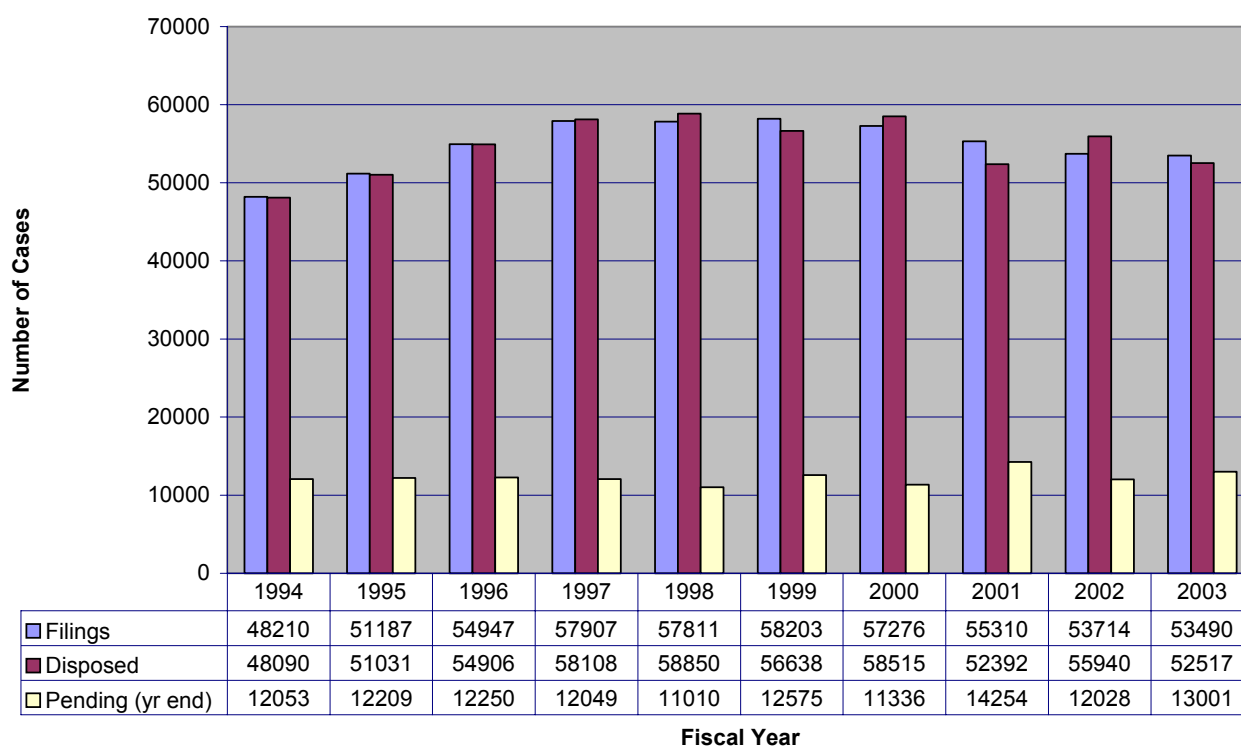
1. The unit of count in Family Court for adult criminal, juvenile delinquency, and civil cases is the filing.
2. A criminal or delinquency filing is defined as one incident filed against one individual. Each incident is counted separately so that multiple incidents brought before the Court on a single individual are counted as multiple charges.
  - a. A single criminal or delinquency filing may be comprised of a single or multiple charges relating to a single incident.
  - b. A criminal filing is received by the Court in the form of an information or a complaint, and a delinquency filing is received by the Court in the form of a petition or a complaint.
3. A civil filing is defined as a single civil incident filed with Family Court. A civil incident is initiated by a petition. In a divorce, although the petition may contain multiple ancillary matters to the divorce, it is counted as one filing.

Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2003 - Total Caseload						
	Pending 6/30/2002	Filings	Dispositions	Pending 6/30/2003	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	7,124	31,160	30,313	7,971	+847	+11.9%
Kent County	2,030	10,105	10,022	2,113	+83	+4.1%
Sussex County	2,874	12,225	12,182	2,917	+43	+1.5%
<b>State</b>	<b>12,028</b>	<b>53,490</b>	<b>52,517</b>	<b>13,001</b>	<b>+973</b>	<b>+8.1%</b>

Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Total Case Filings				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	31,793	31,160	-633	-2.0%
Kent County	10,114	10,105	-9	-0.1%
Sussex County	11,807	12,225	+418	+3.5%
<b>State</b>	<b>53,714</b>	<b>53,490</b>	<b>-224</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>

Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Total Case Dispositions				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	32,759	30,313	-2446	-7.5%
Kent County	10,940	10,022	-918	-8.4%
Sussex County	12,241	12,182	-59	-0.5%
<b>State</b>	<b>55,940</b>	<b>52,517</b>	<b>-3423</b>	<b>-6.1%</b>

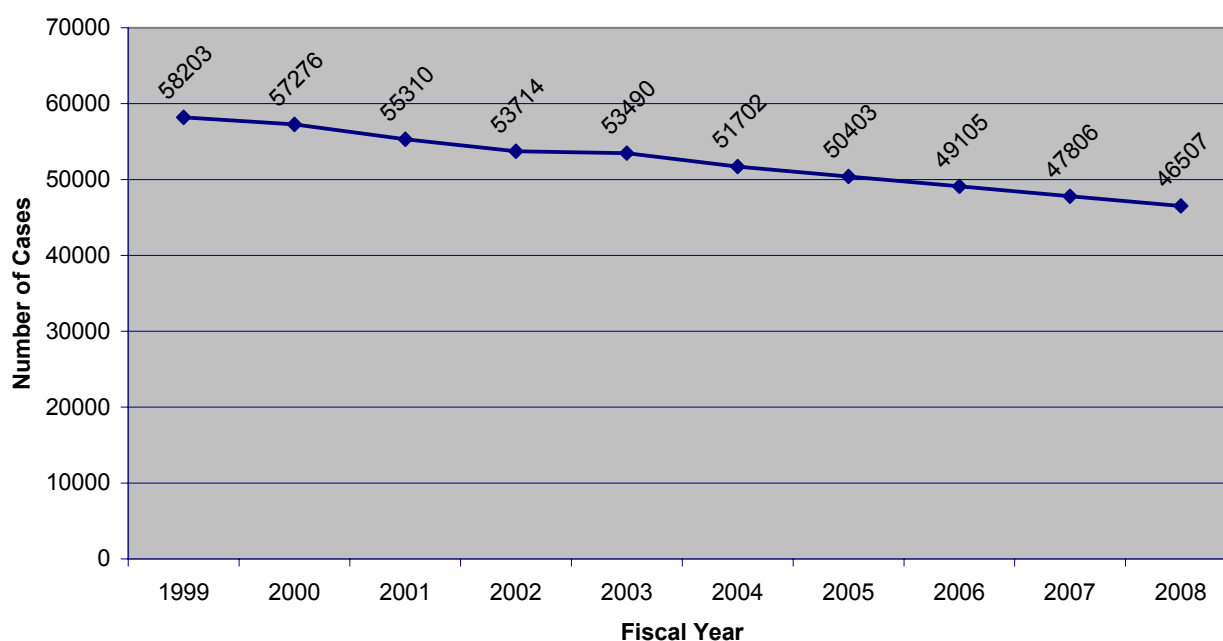
Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Family Court - 10 Year Total Caseload Trend**

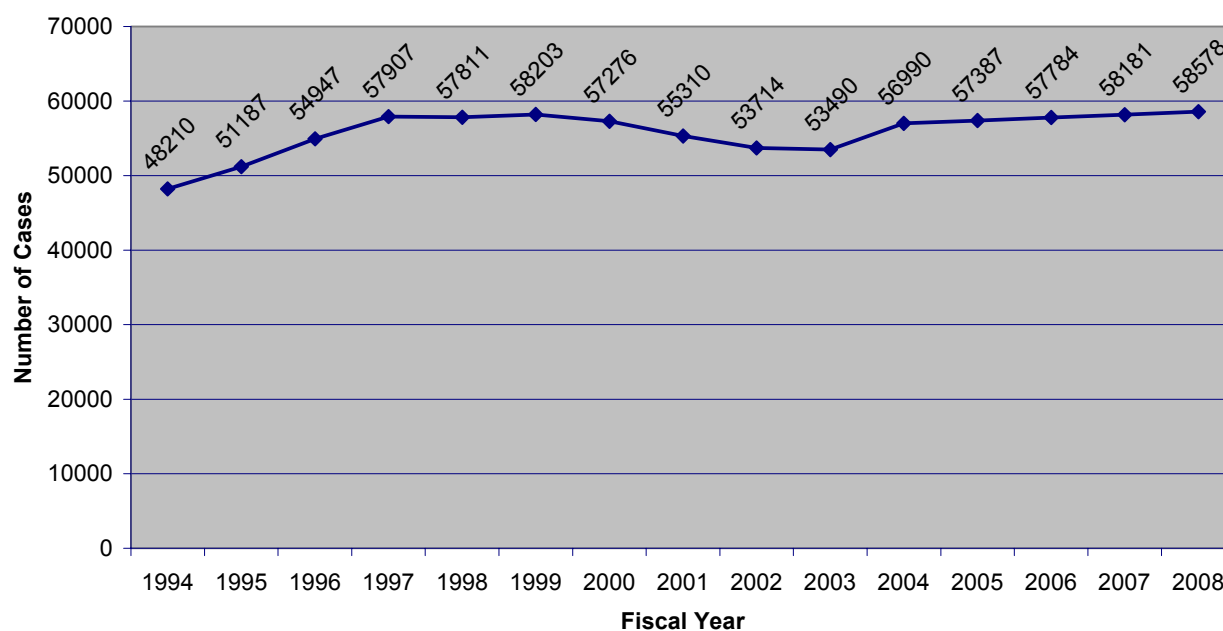
Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.



### Family Court - 5 Year Total Case Filing Projections With 5 Year Base



### Family Court - 5 Year Total Case Filing Projections With 10 Year Base



Trend lines computed by linear regression.

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

<b>Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2003 - Adult Criminal Cases</b>						
	Pending 6/30/2002	Filings	Dispositions	Pending 6/30/2003	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	858	3,516	3,519	855	-3	-0.3%
Kent County	100	1,010	1,023	87	-13	+13.0%
Sussex County	135	1,068	1,102	101	-34	+25.2%
<b>State</b>	<b>1,093</b>	<b>5,594</b>	<b>5,644</b>	<b>1,043</b>	<b>-50</b>	<b>-4.6%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Adult Criminal Case Filings</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	3,352	3,516	+164	+4.9%
Kent County	982	1,010	+28	+2.9%
Sussex County	1,044	1,068	+24	+2.3%
<b>State</b>	<b>5,378</b>	<b>5,594</b>	<b>+216</b>	<b>+4.0%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Adult Criminal Case Dispositions</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	3,379	3,519	+140	+4.1%
Kent County	974	1,023	+49	+5.0%
Sussex County	1,035	1,102	+67	+6.5%
<b>State</b>	<b>5,388</b>	<b>5,644</b>	<b>+256</b>	<b>+4.8%</b>

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

<b>Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases</b>						
	Pending 6/30/2002	Filings	Dispositions	Pending 6/30/2003	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	1,457	5,684	5,160	1,981	+524	+36.0%
Kent County	177	1,656	1,416	417	+240	+135.6%
Sussex County	266	1,940	1,979	227	-39	-14.7%
<b>State</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>9,280</b>	<b>8,555</b>	<b>2,625</b>	<b>+725</b>	<b>+38.2%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Case Filings</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	5,742	5,684	-58	-1.0%
Kent County	1,670	1,656	-14	-0.8%
Sussex County	1,908	1,940	+32	+1.7%
<b>State</b>	<b>9,320</b>	<b>9,280</b>	<b>-40</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Case Dispositions</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	6,214	5,160	-1054	-17.0%
Kent County	1,860	1,416	-444	-23.9%
Sussex County	1,907	1,979	+72	+3.8%
<b>State</b>	<b>9,981</b>	<b>8,555</b>	<b>-1426</b>	<b>-14.3%</b>

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Case Filings					
	Felony	Misdemeanor	Traffic	Total	
New Castle County	1,190	20.9%	4,030	70.9%	5,684 100.0%
Kent County	258	15.6%	1,250	75.5%	1,656 100.0%
Sussex County	320	16.5%	1,389	71.6%	1,940 100.0%
<b>State</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>6,669</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>9,280 100.0%</b>

Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Case Dispositions					
	Felony	Misdemeanor	Traffic	Total	
New Castle County	987	19.1%	3,787	73.4%	5,160 100.0%
Kent County	188	13.3%	1,092	77.1%	1,416 100.0%
Sussex County	363	18.3%	1,380	69.7%	1,979 100.0%
<b>State</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>6,259</b>	<b>73.2%</b>	<b>8,555 100.0%</b>

Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases Pending at End of Year					
	Felony	Misdemeanor	Traffic	Total	
New Castle County	384	19.4%	1,379	69.6%	1,981 100.0%
Kent County	122	29.3%	276	66.2%	417 100.0%
Sussex County	40	17.6%	171	75.3%	227 100.0%
<b>State</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>20.8%</b>	<b>1,826</b>	<b>69.6%</b>	<b>2,625 100.0%</b>

Caseload Breakdowns Fiscal Year 2003 - Juvenile Delinquency Cases, Change in Pending					
	Felony	Misdemeanor	Traffic	Total	
New Castle County	+203	+243	+78	+524	
Kent County	+70	+158	+12	+240	
Sussex County	-43	+9	-5	-39	
<b>State</b>	<b>+230</b>	<b>+410</b>	<b>+85</b>	<b>+725</b>	

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

<b>Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2003 - Civil Cases</b>						
	Pending 6/30/2002	Filings	Dispositions	Pending 6/30/2003	Change In Pending	% Change In Pending
New Castle County	4,809	21,960	21,634	5,135	+326	+6.8%
Kent County	1,753	7,439	7,583	1,609	-144	-8.2%
Sussex County	2,473	9,217	9,101	2,589	+116	+4.7%
<b>State</b>	<b>9,035</b>	<b>38,616</b>	<b>38,318</b>	<b>9,333</b>	<b>+298</b>	<b>+3.3%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Civil Case Filings</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	22,699	21,960	-739	-3.3%
Kent County	7,462	7,439	-23	-0.3%
Sussex County	8,855	9,217	+362	+4.1%
<b>State</b>	<b>39,016</b>	<b>38,616</b>	<b>-400</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Civil Case Dispositions</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	23,166	21,634	-1532	-6.6%
Kent County	8,106	7,583	-523	-6.5%
Sussex County	9,299	9,101	-198	-2.1%
<b>State</b>	<b>40,571</b>	<b>38,318</b>	<b>-2253</b>	<b>-5.6%</b>

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.



Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2003 - Civil Case Filings											
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody					
New Castle County	1,939 8.8%	702 3.2%	3,315 15.1%	4,187 19.1%	2,122 9.7%	2,429 11.1%					
Kent County	735 9.9%	241 3.2%	1,033 13.9%	1,236 16.6%	672 9.0%	881 11.8%					
Sussex County	752 8.2%	154 1.7%	1,348 14.6%	2,638 28.6%	869 9.4%	850 9.2%					
State	3,426 8.9%	1,097 2.8%	5,696 14.8%	8,061 20.9%	3,663 9.5%	4,160 10.8%					
	Visitation	Protection from Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total					
New Castle County	622 2.8%	1,965 8.9%	168 0.8%	115 0.5%	4,396 20.0%	21,960 100.0%					
Kent County	284 3.8%	747 10.0%	47 0.6%	22 0.3%	1,541 20.7%	7,439 100.0%					
Sussex County	187 2.0%	811 8.8%	46 0.5%	30 0.3%	1,532 16.6%	9,217 100.0%					
State	1,093 2.8%	3,523 9.1%	261 0.7%	167 0.4%	7,469 19.3%	38,616 100.0%					

Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2003 - Civil Case Dispositions												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	1,862	8.6%	710	3.3%	3,015	13.9%	4,298	19.9%	2,016	9.3%	2,290	10.6%
Kent County	723	9.5%	236	3.1%	1,083	14.3%	1,215	16.0%	699	9.2%	882	11.6%
Sussex County	713	7.8%	122	1.3%	1,446	15.9%	2,541	27.9%	841	9.2%	814	8.9%
State	3,298	8.6%	1,068	2.8%	5,544	14.5%	8,054	21.0%	3,556	9.3%	3,986	10.4%
	Visitation	Protection from Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	622	2.9%	1,965	9.1%	196	0.9%	130	0.6%	4,530	20.9%	21,634	100.0%
Kent County	280	3.7%	740	9.8%	48	0.6%	39	0.5%	1,638	21.6%	7,583	100.0%
Sussex County	187	2.1%	802	8.8%	39	0.4%	15	0.2%	1,581	17.4%	9,101	100.0%
State	1,089	2.8%	3,507	9.2%	283	0.7%	184	0.5%	7,749	20.2%	38,318	100.0%

RTSC=Rules to Show Cause

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2003 - Civil Cases Pending at End of Year												
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody						
New Castle County	696	13.6%	194	3.8%	1,125	21.9%	686	13.4%	489	9.5%	685	13.3%
Kent County	299	18.6%	71	4.4%	170	10.6%	210	13.1%	106	6.6%	255	15.8%
Sussex County	338	13.1%	77	3.0%	316	12.2%	948	36.6%	175	6.8%	270	10.4%
State	1,333	14.3%	342	3.7%	1,611	17.3%	1,844	19.8%	770	8.3%	1,210	13.0%
	Visitation	Protection from Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total						
New Castle County	156	3.0%	111	2.2%	31	0.6%	78	1.5%	884	17.2%	5,135	100.0%
Kent County	83	5.2%	27	1.7%	29	1.8%	33	2.1%	326	20.3%	1,609	100.0%
Sussex County	84	3.2%	40	1.5%	14	0.5%	30	1.2%	297	11.5%	2,589	100.0%
State	323	3.5%	178	1.9%	74	0.8%	141	1.5%	1,507	16.1%	9,333	100.0%

Caseload Breakdown Fiscal Year 2003 – Civil Cases, Change in Pending							
	Divorces and Annulments	RTSC/Other Civil Contempts	New Non-Support	Support Arrearages	Support Modifications	Custody	
New Castle County	+77	-8	+300	-111	+106	+139	
Kent County	+12	+5	-50	+21	-27	-1	
Sussex County	+39	+32	-98	+97	+28	+36	
<b>State</b>	<b>+128</b>	<b>+29</b>	<b>+152</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>+107</b>	<b>+174</b>	
	Visitation	Protection from Abuse	Adoptions	Termination of Parental Rights	Miscellaneous	Total	
New Castle County	0	0	-28	-15	-134	+326	
Kent County	+4	+7	-1	-17	-97	-144	
Sussex County	0	+9	+7	+15	-49	+116	
<b>State</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>+16</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>-17</b>	<b>-280</b>	<b>+298</b>	

RTSC=Rules to Show Cause

Source : Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.

## Mediation Explanatory Notes Fiscal Year 2003

1. Mediation is a proceeding prior to adjudication in which a trained mediator attempts to assist the parties in reaching an agreement in disputes which involve child custody, support, visitation, guardianships, imperiling family relations, and rules to show cause. Mediation is mandatory in child custody, visitation, and support matters.
2. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement, the matter is scheduled to be heard before a commissioner or a judge.

<b>Caseload Summary Fiscal Year 2003 - Mediations</b>						
	Pending*			Pending	Change	% Change
	6/30/2002	Filings	Dispositions	6/30/2003	In Pending	In Pending
New Castle County	120	9,639	9,639	120	0	0.0%
Kent County	287	2,526	2,622	191	-96	-33.4%
Sussex County	161	3,413	3,359	215	54	+33.5%
<b>State</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>15,578</b>	<b>15,620</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>-42</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Mediations Filed</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	9,135	9,639	+504	+5.5%
Kent County	2,535	2,526	-9	-0.4%
Sussex County	3,627	3,413	-214	-5.9%
<b>State</b>	<b>15,297</b>	<b>15,578</b>	<b>+281</b>	<b>+1.8%</b>

<b>Caseload Comparison - Fiscal Years 2002-2003 - Mediations Disposed</b>				
	2002	2003	Change	% Change
New Castle County	9,119	9,639	+520	+5.7%
Kent County	2,444	2,622	+178	+7.3%
Sussex County	3,865	3,359	-506	-13.1%
<b>State</b>	<b>15,428</b>	<b>15,620</b>	<b>+192</b>	<b>+1.2%</b>

\*Sussex County and State Total amended from 2002 Annual Statistical Report.

Source: Court Administrator, Family Court; Administrative Office of the Courts.